

# Opinion

## Do something new this year

**Heidi L. Everett**

*Editor*



Most of us head into a new year with a grand design to become a better version of ourselves.

If you're like me, we're one week in and already blowing it.

A low-carb diet simply can't compete with dark chocolate surrounding melt-in-your-mouth marzipan. If I'm going to log 1,000 miles on my Runkeeper app this year, I'm operating at a deficit. And that swear jar? It will easily finance retirement.

Several years ago, I decided not to sweat it and aimed for being healthy and happy. I got rid of the bathroom scale and figured as long as I can button my jeans, I'm golden. If I eke out three miles through any movement – walk, jog or meander – it's still movement. And I'm always looking for less offensive ways to express myself (shut the front door!).

Instead, I resolve to learn new things every year. These things might not become my new hobby, but these things make me appreciate the skill and creativity that go into them.

For example, one year I learned how to crochet. I made some pretty sad looking potholders and a scarf before retiring my hook. Because of this learning adventure, I'm impressed by the prolific people who create these detailed textiles.

Other years I took tap dancing and hoop dancing classes through community ed. Grace is not my middle name, but the girlfriends who went on these adventures with me had some great laughs and memories.

I have a 10-minute comedy routine about marriage I wrote that may not ever make it to an open mic, but it was fun to write.

A few years ago, I was introduced to the ukulele and have actually fallen in love with it. We now own four of them and have purchased some for the kids as well. This little instrument is a campfire and road trip must-have.

The hubs and I are now negotiating our learning adventures when the masks come off and our world opens again. I have agreed to let him teach me fly fishing if he takes ballroom dance lessons with me. We'll both be wildly uncomfortable, but that is part of the fun.

If you've made the usual resolutions for 2021 about eating better, exercising more and finding balance, that's awesome. Keep at it.

Think about adding "do something new" to the list. Whether you do something once or discover a new hobby, the act of learning something new is its own success, and you're always better for trying.

Our view

## Cultivate common ground, compromise

It's that time of year again.

Local school boards and city councils are convening for the first meeting of the year.

The 2021 Minnesota legislative session began Jan. 5. The 117th U.S. Congress is in full swing. And we should expect (no, pray for) a peaceful transfer of power in the White House on Jan. 20.

Elected officials are taking their oath of office. Leadership positions are being filled. Committee assignments are being made.

Some fresh perspectives have been brought in. Some institutional memory held

firm.

Now, it's time to get work done, and there is much work to do.

Businesses are hurting. Families are struggling. Healthcare providers are overwhelmed. Educators are navigating ever-changing conditions. Non-profits are coming up short on much-needed funds.

Everyone who is sworn into office was elected to represent some voice, but the reality is our communities are comprised of many voices with legitimate concerns and values. No single perspective or political party has all the answers all

the time. The key is listening, finding common ground and – when no common ground can be found – compromising so all sides give a little in good faith while making strides for their constituents.

Unfortunately, compromise has become a foul word and stalemate has become the norm.

But, all or nothing gets us nothing. The job is compromise. It has always been compromise, dating back to the founding of our country. It may not be easy, but doing nothing can no longer be the answer.

## Please beware of thin ice, heed warnings

"Watch out! You're on thin ice!"

That stern advice to someone indulging in risky behavior is too often literally true – especially right here in the "Land of 10,000 Lakes."

I wince and cringe every time I see somebody on the ice of lakes and rivers, especially in early winter. As a reporter, I have covered all too many ice break-throughs (thankfully none of them fatal) during the past four decades, especially during my years as a reporter in the Alexandria area, where lakes abound.

One day, my editor there asked me to write a thin-ice warning story for the newspaper. I thought to myself, "Oh, not another ice-warning story. Why write them? Apparently, nobody reads them anyway. People just keep falling through." I did some research, interviewed the county sheriff, wrote the story.

Two days later, I got a call from a woman who wanted to thank me.

"For what?" I asked.

"For the story you wrote on the front page of the Echo Press."

She explained: She and two of her young kids were preparing to go for a lake-ice ride on an ATV. They bundled up. Walking through the kitchen, she saw a copy of the newspaper on the table and its front-page headline practically shouting, "Beware of thin ice!" She read the open-

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ing paragraphs. Then she told her disappointed kids, sorry, no ride today. Later that same day, someone (a snowmobiler, if I recall correctly) had caved through the ice on that lake and was thankfully rescued. That's when the woman decided to give me a call.

Suddenly, I was glad I'd written it, happy to know at least one reader – that woman – had read and heeded a thin-ice story. It may well have saved their lives. I told her how I'd been reluctant to write it, figuring it would go unread.

"Well, I did read it," she said. "So keep writing them!"

As of Jan. 1, there were two ice-related fatalities in Minnesota. The latest, on Dec. 28, took the life of a 60-year-old Brooklyn Park woman, Rose Peterson, who was riding on an ATV with her husband and daughter on Kabekona Lake in Hubbard County. They survived. Sadly, she did not.

Most people do manage to survive ice break-throughs, but plunging into a cold lake (or river) is a frantic, terrifying ordeal. Some years ago, I wrote a story about a man who was rescued after caving through the ice on Little Rock Lake near Rice.

There have been two ice break-through fatalities on that

lake, near which I live – a car cave-through in 1980, a snowmobile plunge-through in 1993.

The man who nearly died described to me the flailing panic he'd lived through. After a long struggle and much yelling, he had lost consciousness and slipped way down into ice-cold water. Rescuers pulled him out; he recovered in the hospital.

During the interview, I could hear the chilling fear in his voice as he recalled the incident. He'd thought for sure he was a goner. Several times during our conversation, he emphasized how he'd learned his lesson and never again would he venture onto a lake in winter – not until he first knows for certain how thick and safe the ice is.

According to the DNR, nearly 300 ice-related fatalities have occurred since 1976 in the state's rivers and lakes. People should learn and share with others the following tips: Do not walk onto any body of water unless you know for sure there is at least four inches of new, clear ice on the surface. For ATVs, the thickness should be five inches; for cars and small pickups 8-12 inches and for medium-sized trucks 12-15 inches. Do not venture onto a lake unless you know its characteristics that cause thinner patches of ice. Wear life jackets.

Last but not least, like that wise woman near Alexandria, pay attention to thin-ice warnings in local media. Then *heed* those warnings.

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